

A Worthy example of a Vertuous Wife, who fed
her Father with her own Milk, being condemned to be starved to death,
and afterwards pardoned by the Emperour. The tune is *Flying Fame*.



In Rome, I read, a Noble man,
the Emperour did offend.
And for that fact he was adjudg'd
unto a cruell end.
That he should be in Prison cast,
with Irons many one,
And there be famisht unto death,
and brought to skin and bone.
And more, if any one were known,
by night or yet by day,
To bring him any kind of food,
his hunger to allay.
The Emperour swore a mighty Oath,
without remorse quoth he,
They should sustain the cruell death,
that could be used be.
This cruell sentence once pronounc'd
the Noble man was cast,
Into a Dungeon dark and deep,
with Irons fettered fast.
Where when he had with hunger great,
remained ten dayes space,
And neither tasted meat nor drink,
in this most wofull case.
The teares along his Aged Face,
most pientiously did fall,
And grievously he did begin,
for to complain withall.
O Lord quoth he what shall I do,
for hungry Lord am I,
For want of bread one bit of bread,
I famish starve and dye.

How precious is one crust of bread,
unto my hungry soul.
One crust, one crumb, one little piece
my hunger to content.
Had I this Dungeon heap'd with gold,
I should not care for it all,
To buy and purchase one brown Loaf,
yea were it as small.
O that I had but every day,
one bit of it bread to eat.
Though ne're so mouldy, black or brown,
my comfort would be great.
Yea albeit I took it up,
trod down in dirt and mire,
It would be pleasing to my tast,
and sweet to my desire.
Good haw happie is the Hind,
that labours all the day,
When rugging the Peasant pooz,
that at command both stay:
They have their ordinary meals,
they take no heed at all,
Of those sweet crumbs and crust that they
do careleslie let fall.
How happie is the little chick,
that without fear may go,
And pick up those most precious crumbs,
which they away do throw,
O that some pretty little mouse,
so much my friends would be,
To bring some old forsaken crust,
into this Place to mee.

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I Oh, my heart, it is in vain,
 No succour can I have,
 No meat, no drink, nor water eke,
 my loathed life to save.
 O bring some bread for Christs his sake,
 some bread: some bread for me,
 I dye, I dye for lack of food,
 nought but stone waiks I see.
 Thus a eand night he cries out,
 in most outrageous sort.
 That all the Country far and near,
 were grieved at his report,
 And though that manie friends he had,
 and vaughters in the Town,
 Yet none durst come to succour him,
 fearing the Emperours frown.
 Yet now behold one daughter dear,
 he had as I do find,
 Who liv'd in his displeasure great,
 for matchyng against his mind.
 Although he liv'd in mean estate,
 she was a virtuous wiffe;
 And for to help her father dear,
 she ventured thus her life.
 She quickly to her sisters went,
 and of them intreat,
 That by some secret means they would,
 convey their father meat.
 Our Father deare doth starke she saith,
 the Emperours wrath is such,
 He dyes alas for want of food,
 whereof we have too much.
 Sweet sisters therefore use some means,
 his life for to preserve,
 And suffer not our father dear,
 in prison for to starve.
 Alas quoth they what shall we do,
 his hunger to sustain,
 You know 'tis death to any one,
 that would his life maintain.
 And though we wish him well quoth they,
 we never will agree
 To spoile our selves, we had as lief,
 that he should die as we:
 And sister if you love your self,
 let this attempt alone,
 Though you do ne're so secret work,
 at length it will be known.
 O hath our father brought us up,
 and nourisht us quoth she:
 And shall we now forsake him quite
 in his extremities:
 No, I will venture life and limb,
 to do my father good;
 The worst that is I can but die,
 to sit a Strants mood.

With that away in haste she hies,
 and to the Jaille she goes,
 But with her wofull father dear,
 she might not speak God knows;
 Except the Emperour would grant;
 her fat our in that case
 This keeper would admit no wight,
 to enter in that place.
 Then she unto the Emperour hies,
 and falling on her knee,
 With wringing hands and bitter tears,
 these words pronounced she.
 My hopeles father gracious Lord,
 offending of your Grace,
 Is judg'd unto a pining death.
 within a wofull place.
 Which I confesse he hath deserb'd,
 yet mightie Prince quoth she,
 Clowdsafe in gracious sort to grant
 one simple boone to me.
 It chanced so I match'd my self
 against my fathers mind,
 Whereby I did procure his wrath,
 at Fortune hath assign'd.
 And seeing now the time is come,
 he must resign his breath,
 Clowdsafe that I may speak with him,
 before his hour of death,
 And reconcile my selfe to him,
 his favour to obtain;
 That when he dies I may not there
 under his curse remain.
 The Emperour granted her request,
 conditionally that she,
 Each time unto her father came
 should thowwse searched be,
 No bread nor meat she with her brought
 to help him there distress,
 But every daie she nourish'd him,
 with her most tender breast.
 Thus by her milk he was preserv'd
 a twelbe month and a daie,
 And was most fait and fat to see,
 yet no man knew which waie,
 The Emperour making much thereof
 at length did understand.
 How he was fed and yet his Law,
 not broke at any hand.
 And much admiring at the same,
 and her great vertue shew,
 He pardon'd him and honour'd her,
 with great preferment known,
 Her father ever after that
 did love her as his life,
 And blest the time that she was made
 a loving wedded wiffe.